



Planning, teaching and assessing the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties

# Geography



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This version first published in 2009

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ISBN 978-1-84721-895-7

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Printed in Great Britain

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## Introduction

### What is the purpose of this guidance?

This guidance supports the planning, development and implementation of the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties. It draws on effective practice across a range of schools and can be used in mainstream and special primary and secondary schools, specialised units and independent schools. It also provides support to the range of services that work with these schools.

The guidance can be used with the school's own material, the national curriculum and the frameworks for teaching literacy and mathematics to:

- confirm the statutory entitlement to learning for all pupils and build on the principles of inclusion set out in the national curriculum
- help schools develop an inclusive curriculum by:
  - setting suitable learning challenges
  - responding to pupils' diverse learning needs
  - including all learners by overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment
- provide a stimulus to revisit and revise existing schemes of work or a basis to develop new ones.

### Who are the pupils?

The guidance relates to all pupils aged between 5 and 16 who have learning difficulties, regardless of factors such as their ethnicity, culture, religion, home language, family background or gender, or the extent of their other difficulties. This includes pupils who are unlikely to achieve above level 2 at key stage 4. (These pupils are usually described as having severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties.) This also includes pupils with learning difficulties who may be working at age-related expectations in some subjects but are well below this in others. (These pupils, along with those with other significant difficulties, are often described as having moderate learning difficulties.)

### Who is the guidance for?

The guidance supports the work of a range of adults who are concerned with meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. This includes class teachers, subject coordinators, special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs), senior managers, teaching assistants, parents,

carers, governors, therapists, local authority and advisory support services, and professionals from health, social services and the voluntary sector. Throughout these materials, the term 'staff' is used to refer to all those concerned with the education of these pupils.

## What is in the guidance?

The guidance contains:

- support on developing and planning the curriculum
- support on developing skills across the curriculum
- subject materials on planning, teaching and assessing each national curriculum subject; religious education (RE); and personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship. These include descriptions of pupils' attainment showing progress up to level 1 of the national curriculum, which can be used to recognise attainment and structure teaching.

## What are the subject materials?

The subject materials support staff in planning appropriate learning opportunities. The materials do not represent a separate curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties or an alternative to the national curriculum. They demonstrate a process for developing access to the national curriculum and support staff in developing their own curriculum to respond to the needs of their pupils at each key stage. The materials offer one approach to meeting this challenge. Schools may already have effective structures or may wish to adopt different approaches.

The materials identify learning opportunities relevant to each subject. They demonstrate appropriate learning across the scope of the national curriculum from the earliest levels. They are intended to increase schools' confidence in their capacity to provide appropriate access to the national curriculum.

A common framework for these materials has been used. In each subject, appropriate learning for pupils with diverse needs at each key stage has been identified. Those aspects of the programmes of study that may create particular difficulties are also discussed, as well as aspects that may be unsuitable at a particular key stage. The suggested activities can be used to develop ideas for relevant, accessible and challenging experiences in curriculum plans.

## Responding to pupils' needs when teaching geography

### The importance of geography to pupils with learning difficulties

Learning geography helps pupils develop curiosity in, and an understanding of, themselves, other people and places, and the relationships between them.

In particular, studying geography offers pupils with learning difficulties opportunities to:

- become aware of, and understand, their personal position in space
- become aware of, and interested in, themselves and their immediate surroundings
- explore local and then wider environments
- develop an interest in, and knowledge of, places and people beyond their immediate experience
- experience aspects of other countries and cultures, especially where there are comparisons with their own.

In response to these opportunities, pupils can make progress in geography by:

- increasing the breadth and depth of their experience and knowledge
- studying smaller (local scale) to larger areas (regional and national scales)
- extending studying from the familiar to the less familiar, *for example, from their own locality to places which are further away*
- gaining understanding, *for example, from understanding abstract as well as concrete concepts.*

### Modifying the geography programmes of study

The statutory inclusion statement of the national curriculum requires staff to modify the programmes of study to give all pupils relevant and appropriately challenging work at each key stage. Staff should teach knowledge, skills and understanding in ways that match and challenge their pupils' abilities.

Staff can modify the geography programmes of study for pupils with learning difficulties by:

- choosing material from earlier key stages
- maintaining, reinforcing, consolidating and generalising previous learning, as well as introducing new knowledge, skills and understanding
- focusing on one aspect, or a limited number of aspects of the age-related programmes of study in depth or in outline
- including experiences that let pupils at early stages of learning gain knowledge and understanding of geography in the context of everyday activities
- helping pupils experience geography for themselves; at first, by using a sensory approach to experience and investigate familiar places, and then by contact with different people.

### Geographical enquiry

Geographical enquiry is the process by which pupils find out in geography. They will use it to acquire their knowledge and understanding of the other aspects of the subject – places, patterns and processes, and environmental change and sustainable development. Activities suggested under the heading 'geographical enquiry' should not be taught in isolation but within the contexts of the other aspects. For example, when learning about what their school grounds are like pupils may collect, explore and sort different objects and artefacts. When learning about other places pupils may respond to and use a range of resources for exploration and information.

The development of geographical enquiry and skills begins when pupils explore, through the senses, their own physical surroundings. In this way they become aware of the world around them and begin to understand where and how people and places connect with each other. The range and distance of places studied can be extended gradually to include a greater variety of environments.

Learning about geographical enquiry across the key stages can help pupils to:

- respond to, answer and ask, questions about the world around them (at first it may be necessary for staff to give pupils examples of questions and ways of answering them)
- collect, explore and sort different objects and artefacts, *for example, shells, pebbles, leaves*, and use them as evidence
- use symbols, artwork, modelling, drawing and writing to record



- respond in different ways to people, places and environments by expressing their own views about their surroundings
- respond to, use and understand the words and language of geography
- respond to and use a range of resources for exploration and information, *for example, photographs, pictures, CD-ROMs, videos, artefacts, stories*
- make and use three-dimensional models as well as maps and plans.

### Knowledge and understanding of places

The development of knowledge and understanding of places begins when pupils explore, through the senses, their own personal surroundings. By experiencing and reflecting on their own personal surroundings, pupils begin to develop a sense of place, that is, their relationship to the world around them. Pupils' understanding of space and place can be enhanced when experiences are extended from the classroom, the school building and its grounds, to include the local area and then to places further away in the United Kingdom or abroad. Using geographical questions as part of enquiry can help pupils develop an understanding of different aspects of geography. To develop knowledge and understanding of places two questions might be: 'What is (this place) like?' 'How is it similar to, or different from (another place)?'

Developing knowledge and understanding of places across the key stages can help pupils to:

- explore, recognise and communicate information and views about places and people
- get to know a number of different places, at home and at school
- recognise links between places, activities, functions and people
- experience a range of contrasting localities and environments, *for example, by gaining experience of different clothes, music, food and language.*

### Knowledge and understanding of patterns and processes

A first step to understanding patterns in geography is for pupils to recognise that patterns exist in the physical and human world, *such as a row of coat hooks in the classroom*, and considering why the pattern is as it is, *for example, 'Why are the coat hooks in a row by the door?'* The development of knowledge and understanding of patterns begins by



pupils exploring where things are located in their own immediate environment and using directional terms, *for example, in front or behind.*

An understanding of processes in geography might begin when pupils experience change and recognise that a change has taken place, *for example, when pupils move from one room to another in the school, or when they note seasonal changes in the school grounds.* Questions that may help to develop knowledge and understanding of patterns and processes are: 'Why is (this place) like it is?' 'How is (this place) changing?'

Developing knowledge and understanding of patterns and processes across the key stages can help pupils to:

- explore physical or human features in their immediate and local environment and recognise the patterns that these features make, *for example, the road markings outside the school, the pattern of roads on the housing estate*
- become aware of, recognise and communicate their understanding of changes in the physical or human environment, *for example, that the wind in autumn makes leaves collect in a certain place, the roads are busier in the morning when people are going to work.*

### Knowledge and understanding of environmental change and sustainable development

Knowledge and understanding of environmental change and sustainable development is concerned with the changing characteristics of physical and human environments and the resultant impact on the quality of places and their environments. It also involves an understanding of how environments can be harmed or improved. This knowledge and understanding begins when pupils become aware of change in their own environment, *for example, changes over a period of time in the classroom, school grounds, and the seasons.* It progresses to learning about how people affect the environment, *for example, how they damage it,* and how the environment can be improved or managed now, and in the future. Questions which may help to develop knowledge and understanding of environmental change and sustainable development are: 'What do I, and other people, think about (this place)?' 'What do I like about it?' 'What do I dislike about it?' 'What could I do to make (this place) better?'

Developing knowledge and understanding of environmental change and sustainable development across the key stages can help pupils to:

- experience, be aware of, recognise and communicate their understanding of, and feelings about, changes in their environment, *for example, levels of noise, classroom displays*
- contribute to improving and sustaining the quality of the environment.

### Improving access to the geography curriculum

Staff can make geography more accessible by focusing on the senses.

They can improve access by:

- using materials and resources that pupils can experience and understand through sight, touch, sound, or smell, *for example, sensory trails, multi-sensory environments, such as simulated rain forests*
- organising activities to make up for a lack of first-hand experiences, *for example, simulated environments, theatre, role play, reconstructions*
- giving pupils first-hand experience of site visits, fieldwork and environment walks.

Geography can also be made more accessible through:

- using ICT, visual and other materials to help pupils develop their knowledge of their own surroundings and the wider world, *for example through stories, music, film, artefacts and clothing*
- adapting tasks and environments and providing other activities where necessary, *for example using less detailed maps, models*
- support from adults and others but giving pupils space and freedom to do things for themselves and allowing them time to respond.

Geography can help pupils to develop their broader communication and literacy skills through encouraging interaction with other pupils as well as staff. With some pupils, communication and literacy skills will develop through using a range of visual, written and tactile materials, *for example, large print, symbols and symbol text*, or through using ICT and other technological aids. With other pupils, these skills will develop through using alternative and augmentative communication, *for example, body movements, eye gaze, facial expressions and gestures, including pointing and signing*.

There is no requirement to teach geography at key stage 4. However, for many pupils, geography offers satisfying challenges both as a subject in its own right and as a means of developing skills in many other areas of the curriculum.

## Opportunities and activities at key stage 1

Much of the geography programme of study at key stage 1 is relevant to pupils with learning difficulties. With modification, it can provide stimulating and challenging learning opportunities.

The focus of teaching geography at key stage 1 may be on giving pupils opportunities to:

- use their senses to explore their own surroundings or environment, for example, their classroom, their school and grounds
- become aware of a variety of people, who they are and what they do, in their immediate surroundings and local area.

Given these opportunities in geography at key stage 1:

<b>all</b> pupils with learning difficulties (including those with the most profound disabilities)	explore their immediate personal space. They have opportunities for contact with a range of people and experience and explore places and environments in their own surroundings and close to the school. They have the opportunity to develop their awareness of familiar places and people linked to them and participate in geographical enquiry through observation, both inside and outside the classroom.
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<b>most</b> pupils with learning difficulties (including those with severe difficulties in learning) who will develop further skills, knowledge and understanding in most aspects of the subject	learn some geographical vocabulary and begin to learn about some of the geographical features in their locality and, where appropriate, their purposes.
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<b>a few</b> pupils with learning difficulties who will develop further aspects of knowledge, skills and understanding in the subject	develop skills in interpreting geographical resources, <i>such as symbols, pictorial maps and photographs</i> and use geographical vocabulary when communicating about people, places and environments.
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Some parts of the key stage 1 programme of study, such as recognising and explaining change in terms of how places have become the way they are and how they are changing, may be too demanding for some pupils. Such parts may become less demanding as pupils get older, but it may not be appropriate to teach these parts to some pupils during this key stage. It may be more appropriate to draw on materials from *Practice guidance for the early years foundation stage* (DCSF00266-2008BKT-EN). The following activities show how this can be done and provide examples of approaches staff can take with units of work in geography.

### **Around our school**

#### ***Pupils explore, observe and investigate their immediate environment and/or their classroom***

They may:

- explore their personal space when in different positions and find favourite and interesting objects in the space immediately in front of, beside, above or below them, *for example, in specially designed sensory areas*
- observe, listen to, touch the different parts of the classroom, *for example, carpet, tiles, cupboards, voices, routine music or objects used for different activities*
- make and use a book of photographs of pupils, adults and parts of the classroom
- match photographs of familiar objects taken from above to the objects themselves and match outlines/silhouettes of objects.

#### ***Pupils explore, observe and investigate their school building and grounds***

They may:

- locate and communicate about different areas in and around the school, classroom, playground or the school grounds, and find out how to get from one to another by using matching photographs, symbols or by naming
- make and use a model, supported by photographs, to show who is in each room or part of the school or what is in the school grounds
- find out what people do in the school, *such as the cook, secretary, caretaker*, and look at their work using sensory work boxes, *for example, canteen box, office box, caretaker's box*, observation and

role play. They match photographs of the person to the equipment they use, *for example, secretary to computer, cook to cooker*, and record what they find out using photographs, pictures, audio recording, symbols, artwork and words

- plant tubs or develop a sensory garden to help make their school environment a pleasant place
- explore different surfaces in the school grounds and find out how they contrast with those inside the building, *for example, rough and smooth*
- take rubbings of physical features, *for example, bark, pebbles*, and human or made features like brickwork, wooden floor, talk about them and make collages of the patterns.

### People who help us

***Pupils experience, observe and investigate what people do in their own surroundings***

They may:

- recognise photographs and recorded voices of their family/carers
- start to use simple geographical language to describe who is in the home and where their house is, *such as names of their family, their home address and phrases like, 'near the shop', 'a long way away'*
- communicate about how parents/carers help them and how they help their parents/carers
- make three-dimensional models and collages of their home from photographs and include members of their family
- identify staff members through photographs, *for example, pupils pull away a blanket covering a staff member and choose the right photograph of them or match a photograph to a voice recording*
- watch a video of pupils helping each other and discuss what they are doing and how they can assist each other
- make and use a working display in a circular shape with a photograph of themselves at the centre and objects of reference or photographs which show people who help around the edge.

*Pupils observe and investigate what people do in the local area*

They may:

- find out about the work of people locally *like the police, crossing patrol, fire service*, then dress up and act out the characters in familiar stories
- visit appropriate places and invite different people to the school
- use a variety of media to obtain information, *such as books, videos, CD-ROMs*
- explore clothing, equipment and artefacts relating to different roles and match pictures or symbols to them, *for example, postal worker to postbag, fire-fighter to hose pipe*, use sensory boxes of artefacts for each character and guess who they are.

### Where in the world is Barnaby Bear?

*Pupils follow the journey of a bear who runs away*

They may:

- experience Barnaby Bear spending a day or week with a pupil in the class
- take photographs of where he goes in the week and make a record of events using objects of reference, photographs, pictures, symbols
- when he runs away, investigate the evidence available of the route he has taken, *for example, by following and touching clues like paw prints around the classroom or school; or collecting objects such as a lump of ice and a symbol for the kitchen, to record he has visited the fridge*
- answer questions and be aware of environmental features in each room, *for example, 'What's cold in the kitchen?'*
- respond to, and use, geographical language, *such as 'straight on', 'up/down', 'round the corner', 'Which way now?'*
- make a large map or model of the bear's route and add photographs and symbols of significant features and look for fresh evidence of where the bear is
- obtain postcards or photographs from places he has visited, *for example, the home of a member of staff, the hospital, a holiday location.*



## Opportunities and activities at key stage 2

Much of the geography programme of study at key stage 2 is relevant to pupils with learning difficulties. With modification, it can provide stimulating and challenging learning opportunities.

The focus of teaching geography at key stage 2 may be on giving pupils opportunities to:

- experience, explore and investigate their school and local area, *for example, parks, streets, buildings around the school*
- explore and investigate another area, in the UK or abroad, *for example, school and local park; local area and seaside; local area and village in a less economically developed country, stressing the culture – food, music, clothing.*

Given these opportunities in geography at key stage 2:

<b>all</b> pupils with learning difficulties (including those with the most profound disabilities)	experience, explore and investigate a variety of people, places and environments near the school and in another contrasting area. They take part in geographical enquiry inside and outside the classroom and access some geographical sources.
<b>most</b> pupils with learning difficulties (including those with severe difficulties in learning) who will develop further skills, knowledge and understanding in most aspects of the subject	investigate how people affect the environment and how they may be affected by it. They use some geographical skills and resources, for example, maps, videos, pictures, photographs and ICT, and answer questions on geography in a variety of ways. They notice similarities and differences between places.
<b>a few</b> pupils with learning difficulties who will develop further aspects of knowledge, skills and understanding in the subject	develop skills in interpreting geographical resources, <i>such as symbols, pictorial maps and photographs</i> and use geographical vocabulary when communicating about people, places and environments.

Some parts of the key stage 2 programme of study, such as explaining and considering how places may change in the future and how decisions about places and environments affect the future quality of people's lives, may be too demanding for some pupils. Such parts may become less demanding as pupils get older, but it may not be appropriate to teach these parts to some pupils during this key stage. It may be more appropriate to teach the more demanding parts of the programme of study for key stage 1. Throughout key stage 2, staff can maintain and reinforce the knowledge, skills and understanding introduced during key stage 1 by applying these in different areas, and introduce new learning. The following activities show how this can be done and provide examples of approaches staff can take with units of work in geography.

### Investigating our local area

***Pupils explore, observe and investigate their school grounds and local area***

They may:

- explore places in the school grounds using a tactile or olfactory trail
- listen to and record environmental sounds in the school grounds or local area, *for example, transport, animal, bird and human noises*
- go on environmental walks and use all their senses to explore different textures and features, *for example, grass, paving stones, tarmac, post box, wall, lamp-post, shop, church*
- collect and use photographs and pictures to identify features on their walk, make a plan of them using or making three-dimensional models, and label them
- make and use a symbol map of the school grounds, *for example, follow a string course around the school grounds, stop at marked points, look into features and find them on the map*
- experience, explore and observe the changes in ground covering, *for example, grass to path, sand to soil, crops in fields or plants in the garden*, and explore, observe and investigate land use, *for example, make a landscape to record their observations using different textures*
- experience the size, scales, sounds and atmospheres of different buildings, *for example, church/cathedral, shopping centre*

- carry out an environmental audit in their local area, *for example, count how many litter bins there are, assess the effect of litter and graffiti on the quality of the environment, collect litter, make posters to encourage people to use litter bins* (health and safety guidelines must be observed when involving pupils in activities such as these)
- make a grid map of the local area, explore what is in each grid square and use basic coordinates to find features
- use large scale maps and aerial photographs to locate features of their local area and school.

### Water, water everywhere

#### *Pupils explore, observe and investigate water*

They may:

- consider questions, *such as 'Where can we find water?' 'What do we use it for?'*
- find out where water comes from in the school and local area, *for example, taps, water spray, puddles, pond, river*, and see where rainwater gathers in puddles in the playground and where it drains away
- identify and sort photographs or pictures of equipment into those which use water and those which do not, *for example, washing machines and cookers*
- talk about what people use water for by making a pictorial diary
- using the same size jars, collect rainwater in different places, *such as under a bush, the middle of the playground, next to a wall, in the school grounds*, mark the level of rainwater and then compare and contrast the results, *for example, 'Where was the most water collected?' 'Why?'*
- find out how water affects the landscape, *for example, by filling a bucket with sand and gravel, tipping it on to the playground, washing it with a hose pipe and observing that the sand is washed further away than the gravel*, and asking why this happens

- explore and investigate local ponds, rivers or canals, observing water life, features, movement, uses
- observe rivers and canals on maps
- make a model of a river from its source to a small stream to a wider river
- make a waterway by using clay, sticks and bricks and make models of water craft which might go on it
- use other ways of finding out how water affects the landscape, *for example, video, CD-ROM, stories.*

### Town and country

*Pupils experience, explore, investigate, compare and contrast physical/natural and human/made features of an urban area and a rural area*

They may:

- visit both places, talk about what they expect to see, and think about the clothing they should wear, *such as wellington boots in the country*
- observe, listen to, touch and smell the features of the town and countryside; collect, record and present evidence, *for example, an audio or video recording*, and use it to compare and contrast the features and to show likes and dislikes
- experience, explore and investigate the types of buildings in the town and their uses, *for example, shops, banks, car parks, cafés*
- think about what people do in the town and countryside, *for example, type of work, leisure activities*
- interview people who work and live in the town and country using prepared questions and recording sheets; record answers, *for example, ticking boxes in answer to 'yes/no' questions supported by symbols*; and display the findings in a graph using ICT

- use ICT to make a plan of a town and decide which of the many available features they will 'drag and drop' into their town; then, in a group, ask and answer questions *such as 'Where will the people buy their food?' 'Where will the children play?'* This may be followed by a multimedia presentation describing the positive features and 'selling' the area as a tourist attraction
- visit the library to obtain information on the local countryside, *for example, information sheets on parks and local walks*
- collect, explore and sort natural objects found in the countryside, *for example, leaves, grasses and flowers, stones, samples of crops,* and show them as a 'painter's palette' in graded colours
- look at and compare paintings of town and country scenes.

### Improving the environment

*Pupils explore and improve a specific area in the classroom or school*

They may:

- decide what to improve, *for example, an area of the classroom, the entrance hall, part of the school grounds*
- observe the chosen area and talk about what is poor about it; then, in a brainstorming session, talk about and decide on ways of improving it
- research the improvements and how much they will cost, *for example, by going to a garden centre to choose plants, or looking at a catalogue to choose a new bookshelf*
- write a letter to the headteacher asking for money
- carry out and evaluate the improvements
- be responsible for looking after the area.

*Pupils investigate rubbish*

They may:

- collect rubbish with litter pickers; using health and safety rules, sort and note the types of rubbish; map where it was found; and suggest reasons for areas where most rubbish collects
- throw litter in a metal bin, listen to the sounds, and then make up and sing songs or raps about litter
- make a litter display, *for example, a tactile board or a mobile of hanging cans*
- visit a recycling area and sort collections of cans, newspaper, clothes and plastic into the right recycling bins
- visit a recycling plant
- work with the caretaker to organise the school's recycling collection point.

## Opportunities and activities at key stage 3

Much of the geography programme of study at key stage 3 is relevant to pupils with learning difficulties. With modification, it can provide stimulating and challenging learning opportunities.

The focus of teaching geography at key stage 3 may be on giving pupils opportunities to:

- experience, explore and investigate a range of localities (near, distant and outside the UK) comparing them to their own environment
- appreciate the differences between two areas, *for example, an area in the UK and an area abroad, or two regions of another country such as beach and mountainous areas in Spain*
- study issues of topical significance, *for example a flood, an earthquake.*

Given these opportunities in geography at key stage 3:

<b>all</b> pupils with learning difficulties (including those with the most profound disabilities)	explore and investigate, at a local scale, a wide range of people, places and environments in different parts of the world and experience contrasting environments. They participate in geographical enquiry inside and outside the classroom and access some geographical sources.
<b>most</b> pupils with learning difficulties (including those with severe difficulties in learning) who will develop further skills, knowledge and understanding in most aspects of the subject	recognise some patterns and processes of physical/natural and human/made features. They use a range of geographical vocabulary, skills and resources to explain the geography, such as maps, atlases and ICT to support and develop their learning. They identify similarities and differences between contrasting places.



a few pupils with learning difficulties who will develop further aspects of knowledge, skills and understanding in the subject study at a range of scales (regional, national or global). They will be aware of some geographical issues that affect them and others. They identify geographical questions, collect, analyse and present evidence to help them draw conclusions and develop their own opinions.

Some parts of the key stage 3 programme of study, such as the construction of maps using graphical techniques to present evidence, may be too demanding for some pupils. Such parts may become less demanding as pupils get older, but it may not be appropriate to teach these parts to some pupils during this key stage. It may be more appropriate to teach the more demanding parts of the programme of study for the earlier key stages. Throughout key stage 3, staff can maintain and reinforce the knowledge, skills and understanding introduced during the earlier key stages by applying these in different areas, and introduce new learning. The following activities show how this can be done and provide examples of approaches staff can take with units of work in geography.

### Somewhere different

#### *Pupils explore life in different places*

They may:

- think about how two areas are connected, *for example, find them on a globe and/or map* and trace a route between them, think about how they might travel there, and what it might be like there
- find out about a place in other ways, *for example, through pictures, photographs, DVDs or the internet*, and think about: 'What is the weather like?' 'What does the place look like?' 'What do people do?'
- explore what it might be like to live in this place, *for example, try the food, listen to the music, try on clothes, listen to the language, look at pictures of houses and transport*, and find out what sort of work people do
- observe and discuss how life in the place is similar to and different from life in their local area.

### Weather and climatic variation

#### *Pupils experience, explore, observe and investigate local weather conditions*

They may:

- experience different first-hand or simulated weather conditions, *such as a fan, noises for wind, and sensory boxes with artefacts associated with different weather conditions, for example, rain may be associated with an umbrella, water spray, raincoat and hat, sounds, music and rhymes*
- experience, explore, observe and communicate about seasons, *for example, they visit different classrooms set up as different seasons, spend a day in each and choose the appropriate clothing and food for each and then remember and record the activities with photographs, video recordings, voice recordings, artwork and words*
- keep a weather chart using objects, photographs, pictures, symbols and words
- match clothes to weather conditions
- obtain weather forecasts from radio, TV and internet, and compare them with the actual weather experienced.

#### *Pupils investigate climatic variations*

They may:

- use videos, DVDs and the internet to find out about climatic extremes, *for example, a cold region such as the Arctic, a hot desert such as the Sahara and a hot wet area such as the Amazon Basin, and use globes and world maps to find the places*
- consider the similarities and differences between regions, how the weather affects animal and plant life and the links between climatic extremes and population
- study the effect of extreme weather conditions on people and investigate how they live, *for example, clothing, types of buildings, transport, food.*

### Rain forest

*Pupils experience, explore and investigate the physical/natural features of a rain forest*

They may:

- experience and control (through the use of switches) a simulated rain forest environment, *for example, dappled, dimmed lighting, sound effects, heat, musty foliage*
- observe, touch, smell and taste tropical fruits and vegetables and record their likes/dislikes
- visit botanical gardens and zoos with exotic birds.

*Pupils experience, explore and investigate the human/made features of the rain forest*

They may:

- listen to music and explore artefacts made by people who live in the rain forest
- find information from books, pictures, videos, maps, DVDs and the internet related to work, homes and transport
- make artefacts, *such as musical instruments, jewellery.*

### Changing planet

#### *Pupils explore the moving and changing earth*

They may:

- explore one of the ways in which bare rocks are attacked by the weather. Put different sorts of rock, *such as granite, basalt, soft sandstone, chalk and limestone*, or building materials, *such as concrete, brick, cement block, slate and mortar* into a plastic container and cover it with water. Pupils freeze and melt the water several times and observe and record the results
- explore how sand and mud is moved by water by simulating the movement of a river, by half filling a tray with sand and smoothing the top off with a ruler, then angling the tray to a shallow slope. Water from a hose pipe or watering can is trickled on to the top end and pupils observe how quickly channels appear. They can follow up by watching films of floods in different parts of the world and seeing how people are affected
- make active models of volcanic eruptions, *for example, mix paint with vinegar and bicarbonate of soda and observe the red 'lava' bubble and flow out of the volcano*
- find other information using DVDs or archive footage
- use large construction materials and boxes to make a model town placed on a blanket. By gently shaking the blanket the pupils can see what happens and reconstruct a story of events
- investigate weather events, *such as tornadoes, hurricanes, heat waves, avalanches*, which are in the news or happen at certain times of the year
- investigate how such events affect the people who live in the areas where they occur.

## Performance descriptions

These performance descriptions outline early learning and attainment before level 1 in eight levels, from P1 to P8.

The performance descriptions can be used by teachers in the same way as the national curriculum level descriptions to:

- decide which description best fits a pupil's performance over a period of time and in different contexts
- develop or support more focused day-to-day approaches to ongoing teacher assessment by using the descriptions to refine and develop long-, medium- and short-term planning
- track linear progress towards attainment at national curriculum level 1
- identify lateral progress by looking for related skills at similar levels across the subjects
- record pupils' overall development and achievement, for example, at the end of a year or a key stage.

The performance descriptions for P1 to P3 are common across all subjects. They outline the types and range of general performance that some pupils with learning difficulties might characteristically demonstrate. Subject-focused examples are included to illustrate some of the ways in which staff might identify attainment in different subject contexts.

Levels P4 to P8 describe pupils' performance in a way that indicates the emergence of skills, knowledge and understanding in each subject. The descriptions are characteristic of the types of attainment the learners are likely to demonstrate.

**P1 (i)** Pupils encounter activities and experiences. They may be passive or resistant. They may show simple reflex responses, *for example, startling at sudden noises or movements*. Any participation is fully prompted.

**P1 (ii)** Pupils show emerging awareness of activities and experiences. They may have periods when they appear alert and ready to focus their attention on certain people, events, objects or parts of objects, *for example, listening to trees moving in a breeze*. They may give intermittent reactions, *for example, sometimes responding when moving from a warm/dark/indoor space to a cool/light/outdoor environment*.

**P2 (i)** Pupils begin to respond consistently to familiar people, events and objects. They react to new activities and experiences, *for example, splashing their feet in water*. They begin to show interest in people, events

and objects, *for example, briefly looking around in different indoor and outdoor environments*. They accept and engage in coactive exploration, *for example, feeling the textures of different items of clothing*.

**P2 (ii)** Pupils begin to be proactive in their interactions. They communicate consistent preferences and affective responses, *for example, giving distinctive responses in different rooms around the school*. They recognise familiar people, events and objects, *for example, showing excitement when meeting the swimming instructor at the poolside*. They perform actions, often by trial and improvement, and they remember learned responses over short periods of time, *for example, repeatedly patting aromatic plants in the sensory garden*. They cooperate with shared exploration and supported participation, *for example, moving over different outdoor surfaces*.

**P3 (i)** Pupils begin to communicate intentionally. They seek attention through eye contact, gesture or action. They request events or activities, *for example, moving over different outdoor surfaces*. They participate in shared activities with less support. They sustain concentration for short periods. They explore materials in increasingly complex ways, *for example, pressing tools into wet or dry sand*. They observe the results of their own actions with interest, *for example, disturbing the surface of still water with their fingers*. They remember learned responses over more extended periods, *for example, returning to a favourite location, plant or item of equipment in the school grounds day after day*.

**P3 (ii)** Pupils use emerging conventional communication. They greet known people and may initiate interactions and activities, *for example, prompting a midday supervisory assistant to push them in a swing seat*. They can remember learned responses over increasing periods of time and may anticipate known events, *for example, moving to the fish tank when the fish food is taken down from the shelf*. They may respond to options and choices with actions or gestures, *for example, turning on the fan rather than a lamp on a warm, sunny day*. They actively explore objects and events for more extended periods, *for example, picking up pebbles and shells at the beach*. They apply potential solutions systematically to problems, *for example, pressing the button at a pedestrian crossing on a familiar route to the shops*.

**P4** Pupils extend the skills to help them explore the world. They handle artefacts and materials given to them, *for example, looking at the postal worker's bag and letters, or using a bin to collect litter*. They know that certain actions produce predictable results, *for example, pushing the*

*button will make the fire engine siren sound.* They know familiar places and people and what they are there for, *for example, park, school, police person,* and use gestures, signs, symbols or single words to show that they know them.

**P5** Pupils consolidate a sense of place and direction, *for example, they can follow set routes around familiar places.* They show their awareness (through gestures, signs, symbols or words) of significant differences between specific physical/natural and human/made features of places, *for example, 'cars here' on a noisy street, 'cars gone' in the park.* They can answer simple questions about places and people, *for example, 'Who can help us?'* They start to sort and classify objects in terms of simple features or properties, *for example, pebbles or rocks found on a local walk,* according to colour or size.

**P6** Pupils understand the differences between the physical/natural and human/made features of places. They use pictures or symbols to show familiar places and what they are for, *such as making simple plans and maps of familiar areas.* They show what they think about different people and environments and answer simple questions about places and people, *for example, 'What can you buy in this shop? 'What can you do in the park?'*

**P7** Pupils communicate their preferences about the physical/natural and human/made features of places. They begin to use symbols to represent direction, and can represent and record key features of a place using models or symbols. They are aware of their role in caring for their own environment, *for example, watering plants in the classroom or garden, picking up litter.*

**P8** Pupils recognise the physical/natural and human/made features of places, *for example, identifying buildings and their uses.* They use simple geographical language to communicate their ideas about various locations, functions and roles. They use resources given to them and their own observations to respond to simple questions about places and people. They recognise simple symbols or representations on maps and plans. They show some understanding of environmental awareness and how it relates to their own lives, and they express their views on features of the environment which they find attractive or unattractive.



## About this publication

### Who's it for?

This handbook is for all those who work with pupils with learning difficulties. This includes pupils who are often described as having severe, profound and multiple, or moderate learning difficulties. The guidance relates to all pupils aged 5 to 16 who are unlikely to achieve above level 2 at key stage 4.

### What's it about?

It provides support materials to schools for planning learning opportunities and activities in geography for pupils in each key stage. It includes performance descriptions of early learning and attainment in the national curriculum.

### What's it for?

It will be useful in developing an inclusive curriculum. It can be used in mainstream schools, special primary and secondary schools, specialised units and independent schools. It can also support the range of services that work with pupils with learning difficulties.

### Related material

This handbook is part of a set of guidance on planning and teaching the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties. The entire set, which includes general guidance, guidance on developing skills and subject guidance, can be found on the QCA website at [www.qca.org.uk/ld](http://www.qca.org.uk/ld).

For more copies: QCA Orderline

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ISBN

978-1-84721-895-7

Order ref

QCA/09/4028